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INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUENAAA/SECNAV WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUMISTA/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RUEFHLC/HQS DHS WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEABND/DEA HQS WASHDC PRIORITY
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DEPARTMENT FOR PM DAS COULTER AND ROSATI, WHA, WHA/CAR
SEARBY AND ROSHOLT, WHA/ESPC KUBISKE. L/PM COFFEE
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [MARR](#) [PTER](#) [SNAR](#) [KCRM](#) [SMIG](#) [DR](#)
SUBJECT: DOMINICANS SIGN 505 AGREEMENT, INTERCEPTOR BOATS
TRANSFERRED

REF: A. SANTO DOMINGO 668
[B.](#) 2006 STATE 115271
[C.](#) 2006 STATE 114767

[1](#)1. (U) On June 28, Embassy received from the Dominican MFA diplomatic note DEJ/STI 16058 agreeing to the terms of a "505 agreement" first proposed in REFTELS B and C and most recently relayed to the Dominican Government via Embassy diplomatic note 90 of May 17, 2007. Electronic copies of both notes have been forwarded to WHA/CAR, PM, and L.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Though Dominican military officials voiced no objections to the agreement, delays by the Secretariat of the Dominican Armed Forces in providing advice and consent to the MFA nearly resulted in the postponement of a high profile public ceremony transferring the first 2 (of 4) high speed (60 knots plus, 500 nautical mile range) interceptor boats to the Dominican Navy under the U.S. Southern Command's (Southcom) "Enduring Friendship" program. Ultimately, a concerted, coordinated push by Embassy Charge, senior Embassy-based military officials, and Acting WHA DAS Kubiske delivered the document less than 24 hours before the June 29 ceremony.

Enduring Friendship

[1](#)3. (SBU) Enduring Friendship is a Southcom program that employs the concept of theater security cooperation. Under this program, willing partner nations within Southcom's area of responsibility work together to improve maritime security, thereby reducing terror threats (and associated threats such as narcotics trafficking) throughout the region, to include Puerto Rico and the southern approaches to the continental United States. Recognizing that these partner nations lack the physical means to control their maritime borders effectively, Enduring Friendship provides equipment (boats, communications gear, etc.) and associated training to their navies after national needs surveys are conducted. In the Dominican Republic, this survey was conducted with the cooperation of the Embassy's Military Assistance Advisory Group. The combined value of equipment to be donated to the Dominican Republic and U.S.-provided training is estimated at 7.5 million USD (4 interceptor boats at 434,000/each, with

additional spare parts packages of roughly 165,000 per boat, in addition to trucks, hoists, communications gear, a complete command and control center and, of course, training.) Maintenance of the craft will be performed in the Dominican Republic by U.S.-trained Dominican Navy personnel. Operation of the craft will be by specially training boat crews that have successfully completed a 60-day course in the United States.

Transfer Ceremony

¶4. (U) The pending transfer of the first 2 interceptors had been widely reported prior to the actual ceremony and had been largely conflated with the June 24 arrival of the HSV-2 Swift, though the Swift simply made physical delivery of the boats while undertaking a training mission under Southcom's Global Fleet Station initiative (SEPTEL).

¶5. (U) Reports in the press leading up to the ceremony were factual and were composed almost entirely of statements by leading Dominican military officials during Embassy-sponsored press availabilities. Representative of the lead-up remarks was a statement by Dominican Navy Chief Vice-Admiral Ivan Pena Castillo on greeting the Swift as it first docked. Pena Castillo noted that U.S.-provided training would "increase and strengthen our interoperativity and our state of readiness, not just locally, but rather throughout the region" and said the donated boats would be used "to fight the common threats of narcotics trafficking, narco-terrorism, piracy, human trafficking, and environmental degradation, as well as whatever other threat that could impact the country or the region." Additional dockside remarks by Commodore

Douglas Wied, Commander of Southcom's Task Force Group 40.9 and Vice-Admiral Julio Cesar Ventura Bayonet (representing the Dominican Secretary of Armed Forces) stressed the transnational nature of narcotics trafficking, terrorism, and piracy and suggested that success in combating these threats would only come through close cooperation.

¶6. (U) The actual transfer occurred on June 29 following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding by Charge Bullen and Secretary of the Dominican Armed Forces Lt. Gen. Ramon Aquino

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Garcia on behalf of their respective governments. Remarks immediately following were well-reported, with principal establishment daily Listin Diario leading with Charge Bullen's statement that the Dominican Republic, as well as the United States, is jeopardized by "violent extremists and narco-terrorists." The Charge's remarks, which stressed "our confidence (in the Dominican Republic) and mutual respect," as well as the need for cooperation to combat this common threat, were quoted at length by Listin, with particular care to report the Charge's remark that "these boats are a manifestation and demonstration of the commitment of the United States to help our partners in the region in the joint fight against illegality." This last comment was repeated in almost all coverage and had a high degree of resonance, especially as much reported follow-on remarks by Pena Castillo explicitly linked the donation with President Fernandez' call for increased U.S. assistance in the fight against narcotics trafficking. (REF A)

¶7. (SBU) While both Pena Castillo and Aquino Garcia expressed thanks for the donation before describing the threat largely in the terms the Charge had used, Pena Castillo took additional pains to make a specific and public promise "to ensure that these boats will be maintained in a top mechanical condition for years to come." This was a comment obviously directed at the U.S. audience. (Note: President Fernandez' 2005 request for a Southcom/Embassy survey of Dominican naval, air, and land assets used to secure the Dominican border ultimately resulted in a report that noted grave difficulties with equipment maintenance.) Pena Castillo also made a special effort to mention community

service activities of the Swift's crew while in the Dominican Republic.

¶8. (U) As with the pre-ceremony press coverage, the press generally limited itself to factual reporting. Only one notable editorial questioned the donation, that from the sensationalist/nationalist tabloid daily El Nacional (the same periodical that fed rumors that the United States was building a secret military base during a February 2006 New Horizons Medical Readiness exercise in Barahona). Though the press reporting of the ceremony appeared unbiased, the editorial referred to the Charge as a "representative of imperialism," and the Enduring Friendship program an "imposed" mechanism of "subordination."

¶9. (SBU) Dominican naval officials note that the interceptors are "in the water" and ready for immediate service, though the communications packages are currently not on-line.

¶10. (SBU) Comment: The introduction of these interceptor boats under the Enduring Friendship program has provided a tremendous upgrade to the Dominican Navy in its ability to engage both narcotics traffickers and potential terrorists, providing, of course, the Dominicans actually fuel and employ the vessels. With the high profile associated with their transfer, the Embassy thinks this operability is guaranteed at least in the short term. End comment.

BULLEN